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TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR PREL HK CH KCRM SMIG

SUBJECT: PROMINENT HONG KONG PROTESTANT DISCUSSES ELECTIONS
AND TALES FROM INSIDE THE CITY'S DETENTION CENTERS

CLASSIFIED BY: ACTING E/P CHIEF JEFF ZAISER

11. (C) SUMMARY. ON JULY 31, REVEREND CHAN KIM-KWONG, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE HONG KONG CHRISTIAN COUNCIL (HKCC) AND FORMER CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CE) ELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBER, PREDICTED TO POLOFF THAT IN THE UPCOMING CE ELECTION, 26 OF THE 40 VOTES FROM THE RELIGIOUS SUB-SECTOR WOULD GO TO THE CANDIDATE BACKED BY BEIJING, SEVEN VOTES FROM THE CATHOLICS WOULD GO TO THE PRO-DEMOCRACY CANDIDATE, AND THE REMAINING SEVEN PROTESTANT VOTES WERE UNDECIDED. CHAN, WHO AS A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE PAYS UNANNOUNCED VISITS TO DETENTION CENTERS, SAID HE HAS OBSERVED AN INCREASE IN INDIVIDUALS FROM SOUTH AMERICA, AFRICA, AND EASTERN EUROPE IN HONG KONG IN THOSE FACILITIES. THE FOREIGN DETAINEES SOMETIMES DELIBERATELY MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE POLICE TO ARREST, IDENTIFY, AND ULTIMATELY DEPORT THEM TO THEIR HOME COUNTRIES.

CHAN SPECULATED THAT ORGANIZED NETWORKS WERE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HONG KONG'S GENEROUS VISA REGIME, THE PROTECTION OF DETAINEE RIGHTS, AND THE STRONG RULE OF LAW TO SEND MORE FOREIGNERS TO HONG KONG TO WORK AS ILLEGAL DAY LABORERS OR PROSTITUTES. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) ON JULY 31, REVEREND CHAN KIM-KWONG, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE HONG KONG CHRISTIAN COUNCIL (HKCC) DISCUSSED

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HONG KONG POLITICS AND CHAN'S OBSERVATIONS GATHERED FROM HIS WORK WITH DETAINEES INSIDE HONG KONG DETENTION CENTERS WITH POLOFF. IN ADDITION TO HIS WORK WITH THE UMBRELLA PROTESTANT ORGANIZATION, CHAN WAS A MEMBER OF THE SECOND CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CE) ELECTION COMMITTEE, A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS (NPC) ELECTION COMMITTEE, AND A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, A LIFETIME HONORARY DESIGNATION FROM THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT (HKG). ACCORDING TO CHAN, THE HKCC HAD A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT, BUT UNLIKE HIS PREDECESSOR C.H. TUNG, CHIEF EXECUTIVE DONALD TSANG HAD YET TO PAY A COURTESY CALL ON THE PROTESTANT ORGANIZATION. HE SAID PEOPLE IN HONG KONG GENERALLY WERE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR ECONOMIC SITUATION AND GAVE CREDIT TO CHINA FOR ITS MANY FAVORABLE ECONOMIC POLICIES, BUT CHAN BELIEVED "POLITICAL FATIGUE" AND DISSATISFACTION WITH THE DEMOCRATS' PERFORMANCE WAS WIDESPREAD. THIS IS THE SECOND OF TWO CABLES REPORTING ON POLOFF'S JULY 31 MEETING WITH CHAN.

THE RELIGION VOTE

13. (C) CHAN EXPLAINED THAT THE HKG ALLOCATED 40 OF THE 800 CE ELECTION COMMITTEE (CEEC) SEATS TO THE RELIGION SUB-SECTOR; THOSE 40 SEATS WERE FURTHER SUBDIVIDED AMONG SIX MAJOR

RELIGIOUS GROUPS. THE HKG HAS DESIGNATED ONE ORGANIZATION TO REPRESENT EACH RELIGIOUS GROUP, AND THOSE ORGANIZATIONS SUPPLY THE NAMES OF THEIR REPRESENTATIVES TO THE ELECTION COMMITTEE. LISTED BELOW ARE THE SIX RELIGIONS REPRESENTED, THE NUMBER OF ELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS ALLOCATED TO EACH RELIGION, THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDE THE NAMES OF ELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS, AND CHAN'S ANALYSIS OF THEIR POLITICAL BIAS:

-- ISLAMIC (6) THE CHINESE MUSLIM CULTURAL AND FRATERNAL ASSOCIATION (ONLY INCLUDES CHINESE MUSLIMS); PRO-BEIJING
-- DAOIST (6) THE HONG KONG TAOIST ASSOCIATION; PRO-BEIJING
-- CONFUCIAN (7) THE CONFUCIAN ACADEMY (ESSENTIALLY A HIGH SCHOOL RUN BY A LOCAL FAMILY, WHO APPOINTED SEVEN FAMILY MEMBERS AND/OR FRIENDS WITH BUSINESS TIES TO CHINA DURING THE LAST ELECTION COMMITTEE ELECTIONS); PRO-BEIJING
-- BUDDHIST (7) THE HONG KONG BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION (LED BY THE VENERABLE SIK CHI-WAI, WHO IS ALSO A NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS DEPUTY); PRO-BEIJING
-- CATHOLIC (7) THE HONG KONG CATHOLIC DIOCESE (ALL APPOINTMENTS ARE MADE BY CARDINAL JOSEPH ZEN); PRO-DEMOCRACY
-- PROTESTANT (7) HONG KONG CHRISTIAN COUNCIL (SEE NEXT PARAGRAPH FOR INFORMATION ON HOW THE HKCC CHOOSES ITS ELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS); SOME MEMBERS ARE PRO-BEIJING, SOME ARE PRO-DEMOCRACY

14. (C) UNLIKE THE OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS, THE HONG KONG CHRISTIAN COUNCIL HAS ATTEMPTED TO ELECT ITS EC MEMBERS IN A RELATIVELY DEMOCRATIC FASHION. DURING THE FIRST CEEC PROCESS IN 1997, THE HKCC HELD AN OPEN ELECTION AND ALLOWED ANY CHRISTIAN TO ENTER THE RACE, WHICH PROVED TO BE LOGISTICALLY CHALLENGING. THERE WERE NO ACCURATE FIGURES ON THE NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS IN HONG KONG, AND THE HKCC FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO COORDINATE WHAT BECAME A POPULARITY CONTEST AMONG NUMEROUS CHURCHES SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE CITY. IN 2002, THE HKCC TRIED TO SIMPLIFY THE INTERNAL ELECTION PROCESS FOR THE SECOND ELECTION COMMITTEE BY USING A LOTTERY METHOD INSTEAD. THIS PROCESS ALSO PROVED TO BE CHALLENGING AS HKCC SCRAMBLED TO ENLIST VOLUNTEERS, INCLUDING CHAN, TO MEET THE MINIMUM OF E

SEVEN NAMES, DAYS BEFORE THE LOTTERY DRAWING. SURPRISINGLY, 30 PEOPLE ADDED THEIR NAMES TO THE DRAW AT THE LAST MINUTE. AT HKCC'S REQUEST A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL OVERSAW THE LOTTERY AND SELECTED SEVEN ELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS, INCLUDING CHAN, THE ONLY CLERGY MEMBER. FIVE MEMBERS WERE PRO-PRC LAY INDIVIDUALS AND MOST OF THE MEMBERS WERE UNKNOWN AMONG CHURCH CIRCLES. FOR THE THIRD EC, SCHEDULED TO BE CHOSEN LATER THIS YEAR, THE HKCC WILL HOLD AN OPEN ELECTION IN SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER, WITH ANY CHRISTIAN PERMITTED TO RUN. WHILE THIS AGAIN WILL BE LOGISTICALLY "MESSY," THE HKCC WANTED THE PROCESS TO BE AS DEMOCRATIC AS POSSIBLE.

15. (C) FOR THE ACTUAL SELECTION OF THE CE BY THE EC IN MARCH 2007, CHAN PREDICTED THAT 26 VOTES FROM THE TAOISTS, THE MUSLIMS, THE CONFUCIANISTS AND THE BUDDHISTS WOULD GO TOWARDS THE CANDIDATE BACKED BY BEIJING. THE CATHOLIC SUB-SECTOR WOULD LIKELY VOTE FOR THE PRO-DEMOCRACY CANDIDATE, BUT CHAN SAID THAT THE PROTESTANT VOTES WOULD DEPEND ON THE OUTCOME OF THE HKCC ELECTION.

UNSATISFYING ELECTIONS

16. (C) CHAN SAID HE HAD BEEN FATIGUED BY HIS FIVE-YEAR TENURE AS A CEEC MEMBER AND VOWED THAT HE WOULD NEVER AGAIN RUN FOR THIS POSITION. THERE HAD BEEN LITTLE SATISFACTION PARTICIPATING IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS WHEN ELECTION RESULTS WERE SO "PREDICTABLE." HE ALSO EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE "IMMURITY OF POLITICAL CANDIDATES." ASKED IF CE CANDIDATES HAD LOBBIED HIM BEFORE THE 2002 AND 2005 ELECTIONS, CHAN SAID THAT THIS HAD BEEN A PARTICULARLY ANNOYING ASPECT OF THE JOB. CANDIDATES OR THIRD PARTIES WOULD CALL AND INVITE CHAN OUT TO TEA, THEN LEAVE HIM WITH THE BILL, CITING STRICT ELECTION AFFAIRS COMMISSION (EAC) REGULATIONS ON LOBBYING.

¶7. (C) CHAN ALSO HAD BEEN DISILLUSIONED BY HIS EXPERIENCES WITH THE EAC DURING LAST YEAR'S CE ELECTION. THE TWO-WEEK NOMINATION PERIOD HAPPENED TO FALL IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED THREE-WEEK OVERSEAS VACATION. EVEN THOUGH HE BELIEVED IT WAS A "PREDETERMINED" ELECTION, CHAN WANTED TO BE A RESPONSIBLE MEMBER AND REQUESTED PERMISSION FROM THE EAC TO SUBMIT AN ABSENTEE NOMINATION, BUT THE EAC INSTRUCTED HIM TO SUBMIT A SIGNED NOMINATION BALLOT IN PERSON. UNWILLING TO FOREGO HIS PLANS, CHAN MISSED THE NOMINATION PERIOD -- NOT THAT DONALD TSANG NEEDED HIS VOTE. NOT ONLY DID THE SIX REMAINING PROTESTANT VOTES GO TO TSANG, BUT BY JUNE 15 TSANG HAD RECEIVED 710 NOMINATIONS OUT OF A POSSIBLE 800, ENOUGH TO ENSURE THAT NO ONE ELSE COULD OBTAIN THE 100 NOMINATIONS REQUIRED TO CONTEST THE ELECTION. THE NOMINATION RECORDS INDICATE THAT CHAN ABSTAINED, AND HE LAUGHINGLY OBSERVED THAT SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS LABELED HIM AS "ANTI-DONALD" BECAUSE HE HAD NOT NOMINATED TSANG.

CHEAT SHEETS DURING AN ELECTION?

¶8. (C) CHAN ALSO WAS A MEMBER OF THE 953-PERSON NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS (NPC) ELECTION COMMITTEE, WHICH ELECTED LOCAL DEPUTIES TO THE NPC IN DECEMBER 2002. MEMBERS WERE GIVEN A BALLOT WITH 54 NAMES, FROM WHOM TO SELECT 36. DURING THE VOTING, CHAN OBSERVED SEVERAL NPC ELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS USING A CHEAT SHEET -- PRESUMABLY A PRO-BEIJING LIST -- TO VOTE. RUMORS OF THE USE OF CHEAT SHEETS WERE REPORTED IN THE MEDIA AT THE TIME, BUT NO LIST WAS EVER PUBLISHED. EVEN THOUGH THE GREAT MAJORITY OF CANDIDATES WERE CONSIDERED PRO-BEIJING, CHAN SAID THAT SOME CANDIDATES WERE RELATIVELY MORE DESIRABLE. THIS, HE SAID, WAS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF "PREDETERMINED" VOTING THAT WAS CONTRARY TO A FREE ELECTION.

HONG KONG DETENTION CENTERS -- TALES FROM INSIDE

¶9. (C) IN HIS CAPACITY AS A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE AND AS A REVEREND, CHAN OFTEN PAYS UNANNOUNCED VISITS TO VARIOUS DETENTION CENTERS, AFTER WHICH HE REPORTS ANY ISSUES OF CONCERN DIRECTLY TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE. ONE ISSUE IS OVERCROWDING; ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAD PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF A "SUPER JAIL," THE LEGCO DEMOCRATS REJECTED THE PROPOSAL.

¶10. (C) APPROXIMATELY TWO TO THREE YEARS AGO, CHAN OBSERVED INCREASING NUMBERS OF DETAINEES FROM SOUTH AMERICA, AFRICA, AND EASTERN EUROPE. EIGHTY PERCENT OF THESE INDIVIDUALS WITH WHOM HE SPOKE SAID THEY "CLAM UP" AFTER ARREST AND CLAIM TO HAVE NO IDENTIFICATION PAPERS. MANY SAID THAT THEY WERE AWARE OF THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS (I.E. THE RIGHT TO AN ATTORNEY,

THE RIGHT TO ASK FOR TRANSLATORS, ETC.), BUT THEY WANTED TO MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE POLICE TO ARREST, IDENTIFY, AND ULTIMATELY DEPORT THEM TO THEIR HOME COUNTRIES. CHAN SPECULATED THAT HONG KONG POLICE ALSO MIGHT BE LOATH TO ARREST AND DETAIN FOREIGNERS, DUE TO THE EXTRA PAPERWORK AND COSTS THESE ARRESTS GENERATE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GOVERNMENT PAYS HKD 500-2,000 PER HOUR (APPROXIMATELY USD 64 - 256) FOR TRANSLATION SERVICES, IN ADDITION TO ARRANGING AND PAYING THE DETAINEES LEGAL COSTS. MOREOVER, THE HIGH COST OF DETENTION, AS WELL AS THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT MIGHT TAKE WEEKS TO IDENTIFY AND PROSECUTE THESE INDIVIDUALS, DETERRED THE POLICE FROM TARGETING FOREIGN NATIONALS, SOME OF WHOM COULD HAVE OVERSTAYED THEIR VISAS OR BEEN INVOLVED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY. IN COMPARISON, IT WAS FAR EASIER FOR THE POLICE TO FILL THEIR QUOTAS BY ARRESTING MAINLANDERS, WITH WHOM IT WAS MUCH EASIER TO COMMUNICATE AND WHO COULD EASILY AND CHEAPLY BE DEPORTED ACROSS THE LAND BORDER.

¶11. (C) CHAN SPECULATED THAT ORGANIZED NETWORKS WERE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HONG KONG'S GENEROUS VISA REGIME, THE PROTECTION OF DETAINEE RIGHTS, AND THE STRONG ENFORCEMENT OF THE RULE OF LAW, BY SENDING INCREASING NUMBERS OF FOREIGNERS TO HONG KONG TO WORK AS ILLEGAL DAY LABORERS OR PROSTITUTES. WITH MORE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR ILLEGAL AFRICAN AND PAKISTANI DAY LABORERS IN THE SHAMSHUIPO AREA, FOR EXAMPLE, FOREIGNERS

COULD BLEND MORE READILY INTO HONG KONG. MOREOVER, MANY AFRICANS AND PAKISTANIS OFTEN COULD FIND ASSISTANCE FROM THEIR ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN HONG KONG. AS FOR PROSTITUTES, IN THE PAST MOST WERE OF HONG KONG, MAINLAND CHINA, OR PHILIPPINE ORIGIN, BUT IN RECENT YEARS CHAN HAD NOTED GROWING NUMBERS FROM MOLDOVA AND THE UKRAINE; HE BELIEVED THE EASTERN EUROPEAN PROSTITUTES CATERED PRIMARILY TO MAINLAND TOURISTS. (NOTE: THE "SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST" ALSO REPORTED AN INCREASE IN SPANISH-SPEAKING PROSTITUTES FROM VENEZUELA AND COLUMBIA. END NOTE.)

PASSPORT SCAMS

¶12. (C) ANOTHER AREA OF CONCERN NOTED BY CHAN WAS THE SALE OF PASSPORTS IN HONG KONG AND MACAU. HE EXPLAINED THAT EVEN IF A NIGERIAN NATIONAL, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS DEPORTED BACK TO NIGERIA AND BANNED FROM ENTERING HONG KONG, HE COULD BUY A NEW NIGERIAN PASSPORT IN HIS HOME COUNTRY FOR USD 500 AND REENTER HONG KONG ON THE NEW, GENUINE PASSPORT. ANOTHER PASSPORT SCAM INVOLVED HONORARY CONSULS: IN BOTH HONG KONG AND MACAU, SOME INDIVIDUALS HAVE VOLUNTEERED OR BOUGHT THEIR WAY INTO HONORARY CONSUL POSITIONS OF SMALL ISLAND NATIONS OR AFRICAN COUNTRIES. THE HONORARY CONSUL THEN COULD ISSUE OR SELL PASSPORTS, INCLUDING DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS, TO INTERESTED BIDDERS, REGARDLESS OF NATIONALITY OR BACKGROUND. CORRUPT MAINLAND CADRES HAVE ALSO EXPLOITED THIS PASSPORT SCAM TO LAUNDER ILL-GOTTEN FUNDS IN MACAU, EXPLAINED CHAN. A CORRUPT MAINLAND CADRE MIGHT APPROACH A "SPECIAL COMPANY" IN MACAU, WHICH WOULD HELP TO ARRANGE OR BUY A PASSPORT FROM A FOREIGN COUNTRY, MOST LIKELY A FORMER PORTUGUESE COLONY SUCH AS MOZAMBIQUE, FOR HIS SPOUSE. THE SPOUSE WOULD THEN CONTINUE TO INVEST AND/OR LAUNDER FUNDS IN MACAU AND WOULD EVENTUALLY QUALIFY FOR RESIDENCY; EVENTUALLY, THE MAINLAND CADRE WOULD ALSO QUALIFY FOR RESIDENCY IN MACAU.

SAKAUE